

# HOUSE DEMOCRATS



## A Record Of Unity, Strength And Success In The 108<sup>th</sup> Congress

**NATIONAL SECURITY • WAR ON TERROR • JOBS • ECONOMY • EDUCATION**



**HEALTH CARE • ENVIRONMENT • CHILDREN • MEDICARE • SOCIAL SECURITY**

***“HOUSE DEMOCRATS WERE MORE UNIFIED THAN AT ANY TIME  
SINCE 1960.”***

– Congressional Quarterly Weekly (01/03/04)



From the opening days of the 108<sup>th</sup> Congress – when the Democratic Caucus proposed and achieved broad consensus on an economic stimulus and job-creation plan – until the closing days of this Second Session, House Democrats have built an impressive record of unity that has helped us defeat several outrageous measures and draw clear distinctions with the Republican Majority. This document is a compilation of some of our most noteworthy successes and demonstrates the strong progress that we are making as a Caucus.



## **ACHIEVING UNPRECEDENTED UNITY ON THE BUDGET**

### ▶ **DEMOCRATIC UNITY RATE ON FY05 BUDGET IS 96%**

In March 2004, House Democrats achieved unprecedented unity on our Budget Alternative for Fiscal Year 2005, when 194 Members of our Caucus voted for our Alternative. This was the highest number of Caucus Members voting for the Democratic Budget Alternative since 1995. Our Budget would have balanced the budget in eight years; applied pay-as-you-go budget rules to spending and taxes; matched the Republicans on defense spending; allocated \$6 billion more than the Republican Budget for homeland security; extended middle-class tax relief; and provided more resources for veterans, education and health care.

▶ **100% OPPOSITION TO THE REPUBLICAN BUDGET.** Every Member of the Democratic Caucus voting (202 Members in all) voted against the House Republicans' Budget for FY 2005. Ten Republicans also opposed their Party's Budget, which passed 215-212.

▶ **FORCING REPUBLICANS TO WALK AWAY FROM THEIR BUDGET.** Five days after House passage of the FY05 Budget Resolution, a unanimous Democratic Caucus (198 Members voting) and 11 Republicans voted for a Democratic Motion to Instruct Budget conferees to accept the Senate's bipartisan language extending "pay-as-you-go" budget enforcement rules to both mandatory spending and tax cuts. When it became apparent that this Motion would pass, the Republican leadership held this 15-minute vote open for 28 minutes so that it could twist the arms of Republicans who voted for the Motion. Eight Republicans switched their "aye" votes to "no," and the Motion failed on a 209-209 tie vote.

► **100% OPPOSITION TO THE BUDGET CONFERENCE REPORT.** In May 2004, 100% of the Democratic Caucus (204 Caucus Members voting) opposed the Republicans' Budget Conference Report for FY 2005. Nine Republicans also opposed the Conference Report, which passed 216-213. However, the Republican Party has still failed to enact a Budget Resolution – the first time since 1974 that Congress will not adopt a budget when the House, Senate and White House are all controlled by the same political party.

► **REPUBLICANS' SHAM BUDGET ENFORCEMENT BILL DEFEATED.**

In June 2004, a unanimous Democratic Caucus (196 Caucus Members voting) was joined by 72 House Republicans in voting against the Republican Majority's sham budget enforcement bill, which failed by a lopsided 146-268 vote. This measure would have required budget offsets through pay-as-you-go budget rules for mandatory spending increases but not tax cuts. This defeat was yet another embarrassment for House Republicans on the Fiscal Year 2005 Budget.

► **DEMOCRATIC BUDGET ALTERNATIVE FOR FY04 RECEIVES STRONG SUPPORT.**

In March 2003, 192 Members of the Democratic Caucus (95% of the Caucus Members voting) voted for our Budget Alternative for FY04. This Democratic Budget Alternative included a fast-acting, fair and fiscally responsible economic stimulus and job-creation plan. On final passage of the Republican Budget, House Republican leaders were forced to hold the 15-minute vote open for 26 minutes as they "encouraged" a chosen few Members on their side of the aisle to switch their votes. Only one "Democrat" (the Party-switching Republican Ralph Hall) voted for the Republican Budget; 12 Republicans voted against it.

► **REPUBLICANS REPUDIATE THEIR OWN BUDGET FOR FY04.** Just 96 hours after they passed their Budget Resolution in March 2003, House Republicans walked away from it on April 1, 2003, voting for a Democratic Motion to Instruct that called on Budget conferees to reject funding cuts in the Republican Budget Resolution, including \$14.6 billion in cuts in Veterans' benefits and \$9.4 billion in cuts to key education programs. After opposing the Democratic Motion for 30 minutes, Republican leaders flip-flopped and supported it. The Democratic Motion passed 399-22.

► **100% OPPOSITION TO THE REPUBLICAN CONFERENCE REPORT.** In April 2003, 204 Members of the Caucus – 100% of Democrats voting – voted against the Republicans' Budget Conference Report for FY04. Seven Republicans also opposed the Conference Report.



## **PRESCRIPTION DRUGS: AN ALBATROSS AROUND REPUBLICANS' NECKS**

### ▶ **AN UNPRECEDENTED ASSAULT ON THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS.**

In perhaps the seminal moment of the 108th Congress, the Republican leadership was forced to hold open a 15-minute vote on the Republican Prescription Drug Conference Report for two hours and 51 minutes in the early hours of November 22, 2003, so that it could twist the arms of its Members who voted “no” and urge them to change their votes to “aye.” In an unprecedented move, the Republican leadership allowed the Secretary of the Health and Human Services, Tommy Thompson, to come onto the House Floor to personally lobby reluctant Republicans.

And the actions during this unprecedented vote – including the allegation of “bribes” and special deals being offered to Rep. Nick Smith (R-MI) as an inducement to change his vote – provoked an investigation by the House Committee on Standards of Official Conduct that led to the public admonishment of Majority Leader Tom DeLay and Reps. Candice Miller (R-MI) and Nick Smith. The Conference Report passed 220-215, but Democratic unity on this historic vote highlighted the fatal flaws of the Republican legislation as well as the Majority’s ethical transgressions.

▶ **95.6% OF DEMOCRATS VOTE AGAINST HOUSE PASSAGE OF REPUBLICANS’ DRUG BILL.** In June 2003, the Democratic Caucus “defeated” the Republicans’ prescription drug bill in the 15 minutes allotted for voting but the Republican leadership held that vote open for nearly an hour so that it could twist the arms of Republican Members, urging them to change their “no” votes to “aye.” The Majority ultimately prevailed, 216-215; 196 Members of the Caucus (or 95.6% of the Caucus Members voting) and 19 Republicans voted against this bill.



## **OPPOSING THE REPUBLICANS’ FISCALLY IRRESPONSIBLE TAX BILLS**

### ▶ **DEMOCRATS ACHIEVE NEAR UNANIMITY ON REPUBLICANS’ IRRESPONSIBLE AND UNFAIR TAX BILL.**

In May 2003, Democratic unity on the House Republicans’ fiscally irresponsible tax bill – which provided \$550 billion in tax cuts over 11 years and concentrated the benefits among the highest-income taxpayers – was 98 percent. The Republican tax bill passed 222-203, with 200 Democrats and three Republicans voting against the measure. Later in May, House Democrats achieved a unity rate of 96.6 percent on the Republicans’ Tax Conference Report, with 199 Members of the Caucus and one Republican voting against it.

▶ **REPUBLICANS FORCED TO PULL A TAX BILL WITH EXTRANEIOUS PROVISIONS.**

In April 2003, House Democrats' unity forced Republican leaders to pull the "Taxpayer Protection and IRS Accountability Act" off the Suspension Calendar after they added extraneous provisions to the bill. The House eventually passed the bill in June 2003, after removing some of the objectionable provisions. However, the Senate passed a different version and the legislation has not become law.

▶ **REPUBLICANS FORCED TO PULL A SECOND TAX BILL.**

In March 2003, Republican leaders were forced to cancel consideration of the "Armed Services Tax Fairness Act" – a bipartisan tax bill that provided tax relief to men and women in the armed forces – because they lacked the votes to prevent Democrats from stripping unrelated special interest tax breaks from the bill. Democrats supported the underlying bill but opposed the special-interest provisions, and argued that such provisions delayed tax relief to our servicemen and women. Because of Democratic unity, a cleaner version of this legislation was later passed.



**HOLDING REPUBLICANS RESPONSIBLE FOR BREAKING  
THEIR PROMISES ON EDUCATION**

▶ **DEMOCRATS UNANIMOUSLY OPPOSE UNDER-FUNDED EDUCATION BILL.**

In July 2003, 100% of the Democratic Caucus (199 Members voting in all) voted against the Republicans' Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations Bill because it, among other things, broke the Republicans' promises on the "No Child Left Behind Act;" broke repeated promises to increase special education funding; broke promises to increase funding for Title I; reduced commitments to support higher education; and slashed unemployment programs. Despite this unity, the measure prevailed 215-208.

▶ **UNANIMOUSLY FIGHTING THE REPUBLICANS' MISGUIDED HEAD START BILL.**

Also in July 2003, a unanimous Democratic Caucus (204 Members voting) and 12 Republicans opposed the Republicans' "School Readiness Act" because it block-grants the Head Start program, jeopardizes the educational achievement of low-income children, and allows the use of federal funds to hire and fire Head Start teachers based on religion. The bill passed, however, 217-216.



## **SUBVERTING THE WILL OF CONGRESS ON OVERTIME PAY**

### ▶ **DEMOCRATS' AMENDMENT BLOCKING OVERTIME RULES PREVAILS.**

In September 2004, the House approved a Democratic Amendment to the Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Bill that would block any funds from being spent to enforce the Bush Administration's rule change stripping an estimated 6 million workers of overtime pay. A unanimous Democratic Caucus was joined by 22 Republicans in voting for this Amendment, which passed 223 to 193.

### ▶ **FIGHTING THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION – AND WINNING – ON OVERTIME PAY.**

In October 2003, 200 Caucus Members (99 percent of the Caucus Members voting) voted for the Democratic Motion to Instruct conferees on the Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Bill to accept Senate-passed language to block the Bush Administration's proposed regulatory changes denying overtime pay to millions of American workers. Twenty-one Republicans also voted for this Motion, which prevailed 221-203. The bipartisan will of the House and Senate was subverted when this language was dropped from the Omnibus Appropriations Bill in December 2003.



## **DEMOCRATS DEFEAT REPUBLICANS' "COMP" TIME EFFORT**

### ▶ **DEMOCRATS FORCE REPUBLICANS TO PULL "COMP TIME" BILL.**

In June 2003, House Democrats' unity forced Republican leaders to pull the misnamed "Family Time Flexibility Act" from the Floor schedule. The Republican leadership could not secure the votes needed to pass this outrageous attempt to rollback the 40-hour workweek and overtime pay. Republican leaders have never brought this legislation back up for a vote.



## **REPUBLICANS SUBVERT THE WILL OF CONGRESS ON THE FAA CONFERENCE REPORT**

### ▶ **REBUKING REPUBLICANS ON THE FAA CONFERENCE REPORT.**

In October 2003, House Democrats unanimously supported a Motion to Recommit the Republicans' FAA Conference Report – a clear rebuke to the Republican leadership, which altered the legislation in conference after it passed the House 418-8 and the Senate 94-0. The House and Senate bills explicitly barred the privatization of air traffic controllers. However, after virtually no discussion and a make-believe conference, the Republican leadership stripped this language out of the bill. Two days later, House Republicans passed their objectionable FAA Conference Report, 211-207, with 196 Members of the Caucus and 11 Republicans voting against it.



## DEMOCRATS FIGHT TO HELP THE UNEMPLOYED

### ▶ AUTHORIZING FUNDING FOR AN EXTENSION OF UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS.

In February 2004, the House approved a Democratic Amendment to the “Improving the Community Services Block Grant Act” to authorize funding for a six-month extension of unemployment benefits. Thirty-nine Republicans joined a unanimous Democratic Caucus (188 Democrats voting) in voting for this bipartisan amendment, which passed 227-179. This legislation passed by voice vote in the House, but has not moved in the Senate.

### ▶ MOTION ON UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION.

In April 2003, a unanimous Democratic Caucus – and 67 Republicans – voted for a Motion to Instruct conferees on the Wartime Supplemental Appropriations Act to agree to Senate language providing 26 weeks of additional temporary extended unemployment benefits for displaced airline-related workers. Democrats successfully pressured Republicans to extend the Temporary Extended Unemployment Compensation Program in May 2003, but the Program expired in December 2003.



## SUPPORTING WELFARE REFORM

### ▶ STRONG SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRATIC PLAN ON WELFARE REFORM.

In February 2003, 196 Members of the Caucus voted for the Democratic substitute on Welfare Reform. The Democratic substitute would have increased mandatory funding for child care by \$11 billion over five years, expanded state flexibility, and increased the core work requirements from 20 to 24 hours a week.



## DEMOCRATS' DISCHARGE PETITION PRODS REPUBLICANS ON MILITARY BENEFITS

### ▶ MILITARY SURVIVOR BENEFIT PROGRAM ADDED TO DEFENSE BILL.

In April 2004, Democrats filed a Discharge Petition to allow consideration of H.R. 548, which phases-out the benefit-reduction to military surviving spouses and has 306 co-sponsors. In May, 200 Democrats had signed the Discharge Petition, and Democratic pressure prompted Republicans to add the measure to the Defense Authorization Act, which is still pending.